



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

July 14, 2013

Jump Start # 471

Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

The beginning point. Just about everything we do has a starting point. It is said that a journey of a 1,000 miles begins with the first step. There is the beginning point of a college career. There is a beginning point of personal finances. There is a beginning point of romance, when two catch each other's eyes. Here, we learn of the beginning point of our relationship with God and the beginning point of faith.

This verse tells us that without faith we cannot please Him. Obedience without faith doesn't make sense. Service without faith doesn't happen. Dedication and devotion without faith is shallow and empty. To please God, you must believe.

The Hebrew writer tells us two things about this faith or belief.

1. The follower of God must believe that God is. "He is." That sounds odd in the English language. It seems that we need a qualifying word to follow. The follower must believe that He is _____. We can fill in a ton of words. He is good. He is holy. He is righteous. He is right. He is powerful. He is the authority. He is to be obeyed. He is to be feared. We could continue with this all day. Instead, the writer says, "He is." We must believe that He is. Present tense, not He was, nor, He will be, nor, He ought to be, or, He should be. Rather, He is. God is. The Bible gives us the evidence to come to this conclusion. Page after page shows God is.
2. The follower must also believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. God recognizes and acknowledges those that seek Him. Jesus said in the sermon on the mount, "Seek and ye shall find." God rewards those that seek Him. That's the way God is. He loves us. He wants us to want Him.

Now, just how does God reward us? New car in the drive way, fat 401K, healthy grandkids, vacations in the Alps-sounds good, but it also sounds extremely selfish,vain, and material. God's not like that. If that's what you are after, you'll not find that in God. Those things don't last, nor produce the inner peace. Why would a person seek God? What are they looking for? What does God offer? Forgiveness. That's huge. Sins hanging around our necks do not make us attractive at all. Purpose. God gives us a reason to live and a meaning to get out of bed everyday, and it's not to save the environment, self improve us, but rather, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. God helps us in this grand spiritual work of preparing people for Heaven. We seek God to be right. We seek God to know. We seek God because we love Him.

The rewards are connected to what we are seeking. Peace, purpose, forgiveness, a place in His kingdom, and ultimately, Heaven. God is spiritual. The rewards are connected to the way God is.

The rewards don't come first. They come after a person believes that God is and after a person seeks God.

Seeking is more than just wanting...it's diligence, it's longing, it's looking, it's getting up and getting at it. Seeking means to follow. Sometimes the journey is lonely. Sometimes the path takes you through dark canyons. Sometimes the path seems long. Sometimes it's a bit dangerous. Seeking is walking. Seeking is following. Seeking is more than Sunday in a church building. It's a Monday morning at work. It's a Tuesday afternoon while driving in the car. It fills the mind as you decide which TV show to watch. It's the force that gets you up and out the door to help someone else, when you really don't feel like it. It's shaping, molding and becoming like Jesus. It's being filled with His word. It's having a heart like He has. It's coming home after we have shamed ourselves like the Prodigal did. It's apologizing when we said things that we shouldn't have. It's reading the Bible. It's seeing what God wants from all of us.

That's seeking. It's a life long journey. God recognizes those that do that. He rewards them.

Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must first deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Lk 9:23).

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